IT'S A TRUISM THAT CAPITALISM NEVER SOLVES ITS PROBLEMS BUT ONLY MOVES THEM AROUND. FINALLY IT'S RUNNING OUT OF SPACE.



MANIFESTO OF THE

COMMITTEE TO ABOLISH OUTER SPACE

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bones of a midwinter tree, or a drab curtain of rain creeping slowly from the end of your street. Maybe the bodies on a crowded train will suddenly release the smell of damp cool caves, maybe thin strands of grass will sprout from the cracks in your tile grouting. Maybe, with increasing regularity, you'll start to see our initials on walls and underpasses, not spray-painted, but emerging from the patterns of ripped fliers and mossy stains. Whatever it is, you'll know. In a movement as strange and senseless as the spinning of the stars, you will have been elected to join the Committee to Abolish Outer Space.

by Sam Kriss

THERE'S NOTHING THERE ALREADY.

We have been lied to, subjected to a cruel and chilly lie, one so vast and total it's no longer fully perceivable but has turned into the unseen substrate of everyday life. It's a *political* lie. They told us that outer space is beautiful.

They showed us nebulae, big pink and blue clouds draped in braids of purple stars, always resolving themselves at the pace of cosmic infinity into genital forms, cocks and cunts light years wide. They superimposed puddle-thin quotes over these pictures, so that the galaxies could speak to you in the depths of your loneliness, whispering from across a trackless infinity that you're so much better than everyone else, because you fucking love science. The words are lies, the colors are lies, the nebulae are lies. These images are collated and pigmented by computers; they're not a scene you could ever see out the porthole of your spaceship. Space isn't even ugly; it isn't anything. It's a dead black void scattered with a few grey rocks, and they crash into each other according to a precise mathematical senselessness until all that's left is dust.

Schopenhauer said that we live in the worst of all possible worlds. As ever, he thought he was being far more pessimistic than he actually was. If things were any worse than they are, he wrote, the universe would be impossible; it would collapse into a state of total emptiness and decay. In

his cheery sun-soaked self-delusion he didn't seem to consider that the world is *not* possible and never was, that this fall into nothing has already happened.

It's now known that our era, the stelliferous era of galaxies and stars and colorful nebulae that don't really exist, is vanishingly short. This whole stupid dance will last for, at most, a few trillion years; it was winding down as soon as it started. After that, after the stars have faded and the planets have all fallen from their orbits, there will only be black holes, and even these will decay over time. For unimaginable eons there will only be a few scattered particles sailing across a total void. If two happen to meet, a single positronium atom might form, float briefly, and decay again, and this single atom might be the first thing to happen in the entire universe for millions of years. This is where we're all headed—in the grand scale of things we're already there—and it will go on for so long that the age of light and warmth and stars and trees and people will seem like a brief flash around the time of the Big Bang. Already, in the short time since Schopenhauer, the entropic rot has spread, the uniformity, the blanketing, the pollination, the strewing of electronic debris across the void, the people on the moon, the tin-can probes on Mars and Venus and comets.

The Committee to Abolish Outer Space (C.A.O.S.) does not despair at all this. We do not hate outer space, because it's impossible to hate something that doesn't exist. When the universe is already in the process of unmaking itself, when this unmaking of itself is the first condition and the final truth of its unreal existence, abolishing it means something very different from destroying it. Our slogans are short and rousing ("Fuck the moon!"), but we intend to abolish outer space out of love.

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You can float in gravity, if you know how to navigate the tiny eddies of air, divine the nanocurrents, become as weightless as a dandelion seed. C.A.O.S. travels the world on light summer breezes; this is how we watch our enemies. Some of us burned to nothing in the fires of space-shuttle launch pads, some of us were battered to death trying to wrest Galileo's telescope from his hands. The unluckiest of us were sent to Texas, to spy on the 17th annual convention of the International Mars Society.

We have a program, closely guarded through the centuries. At one time it was the hidden book of the Sumerian heresiarchs, later the mystics of Europe were dimly aware of it as the Holy Grail:

> 1 First we will abolish the moon, that smug sack of shit in the sky, our constant condescending stalker. This should be the easiest step: People have set foot on its surface, and come back, and eventually they stopped going there; they realized how utterly dull it is.
>
> 2 Next we will overthrow the fascist institution of the sun, finally achieving the dream of all great revolutionary movements in history.
>
> 3 We will disestablish the planets, one by one, leaving them to vanish with Pluto into death. We will sweep up the dusty nebulae, plug up the black holes, drink up the Milky Way, tear down the Great Wall brick by brick.
>
> 4 Comets, asteroids, space dust, quantum foam: no more.
>
> 5 Finally, when our victory is almost complete, we will abolish low earth orbit, the black depths of the oceans, the wildernesses of the poles, the pulsing core of the human psyche.

We said earlier that for us to abolish something does not mean to destroy it. Once the cosmos was thought to be painted on the veil of the firmament, or to be some kind of divine metaphor, a flatness inscribed with thousands of meaningful stories. Since then it's become *outer space*, a grotesque emptiness. Space is a site of desecration, an emptiness in which one moves, and moving into space means closing down any chances for Earth. C.A.O.S. is not interested in setting up limits. We want to create a future, not one of tin cans dodging rocks in a void, but a future for human life. To do this we must abolish outer space with all its death and idiocy, and return the cosmos to its proper domain, which is mythology, so that when we look up it will be in fear and wonder, and the knowledge that we live in a world that is not possible.

Join us. There's no need to find us; we will find you. One morning you might step outside to find a tiny bird staring at you intently from the shivering

seen anything yet. As Silvia Federici showed, the process of primitive accumulation took place not only across the ravaged terrain of the Americas but across the territory of the female body, using technologies of power acquired through colonial conquest. Any new capitalist feeding frenzy will bring with it not only immiseration and slavery but new techniques of discipline, unimaginable today but perhaps not unlike those claws that will drag mineral-rich asteroids into the waiting maws of the machines. Marx wrote that "capital comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt." In the first phase of primitive accumulation it arose as a monster out of the stolen earth. What new tentacled horrors could arrive from the dead blackness of outer space?

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The Committee to Abolish Outer Space has existed for a long time—possibly forever. The movements we founded over the centuries had different names and different leaders, but all of them were in some way part of our war against the stars. Only now are we making ourselves public—behind frail masks—because the danger is almost upon us. For all our great age and our knowledge of certain secrets, we are not powerful. We are few, and hunted, and scared, but in our weakness we will conquer. C.A.O.S. sets out these five guiding principles:

> 1 Humanity will never colonize Mars, never build moon bases, never rearrange the asteroids, never build a sphere around the sun.
>
> 2 There will never be faster-than-light travel. We will not roam across the galaxy. We will not escape our star.
>
> 3 Life is probably an entirely unexceptional phenomenon; the universe probably teems with it. We will never make contact. We will never fuck green-skinned alien babes.
>
> 4 The human race will live and die on this rock, and after we are gone something else will take our place. Maybe it already has, without our even noticing.
>
> 5 All this is good. This is a good thing.

What will Mars look like in ten years, fifty, a hundred, five hundred? It's a question that breeds monsters. Maybe domed cities, maybe tidy spa resorts on the shores of the Hellas basin. Or there could be dark and vast robots there, colossi wreathed in smoke and fire striding across the planet's surface, digging deep scars into the rock with metal jaws, stripping out the useful minerals and burning the rest in an atomic blaze. We might see the streaming furrows of a dust storm on the horizon, while the last colonist gnaws at the bones of her fellow adventurers, driven mad by that tiny dot in the night sky that was once her home. The whole thing might have been blasted into fragments and melted down for slag. Still, the worst outcome might be for Mars to end up looking like the area around Clear Lake, south of Houston, the site of NASA's Johnson Space Center, where our planet faintly touches the blank idiocy of outer space. This is where they held their convention; this is where we flew; this is why we were forced to write this manifesto.

Nobody should be surprised that there's an international conference dedicated to promoting human settlement of Mars. Evil has always been with us. What shocks us is the extent to which this ugly and stupid idea has been absorbed into society, twisting itself into a positive inevitability. Much of the blame for this must go to Robert Zubrin's book *The Case for Mars*. The colonization movement brings together people of all backgrounds, disciplines, and psychoses (one talk at the convention advocated "Marscoin: a cryptocurrency exploring private funding to bootstrap space colonization," another proposed a spaceship powered by black holes that could reach Mars orbit in 60 minutes and the Andromeda galaxy in 20 hours)—but they share this one scripture. Just mentioning Zubrin's book at a convention panel was enough to prompt spontaneous, raptured applause. Our movement has never had a single founding text, until this manifesto: We despise all singularities. To show why, it's sadly necessary to read the Bible of our enemies.

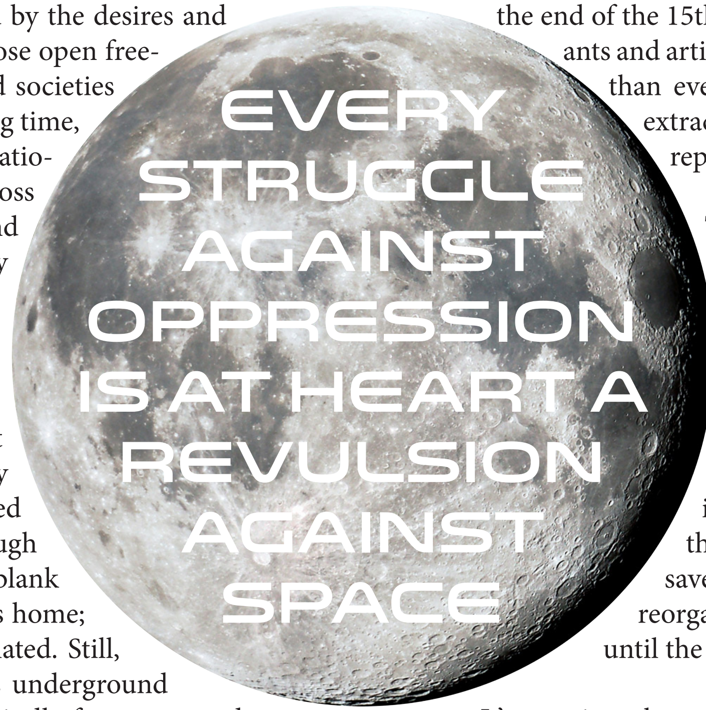
It's a strange and unnerving text. Despite the title, most of the work isn't so much a case for Mars as a pedantic argument for the feasibility of Zubrin's own Mars Direct program. Only in the final chapters does something like a reason *why* we should want to go to Mars emerge: Space colonization should be read as an exact analogue to Christopher Columbus's pillage of the Americas. (Columbus is mentioned four times in the book, Marx only once; this is always a bad sign.) By opening up the Americas to settlement,

Columbus created something new and unique called "Western humanist civilization." Out of stifling feudal ignorance grew a society in which "human life and human rights are held precious beyond price," a world of restless dynamism where scientific innovation is upheld and every effort is made to improve the quality of life for all.

This society depends for its existence on the presence of a frontier, a blank homogeneous space to be settled and transformed by the desires and fantasies of an entrepreneurial libidinality, one whose open freedom can't help but transform in turn those settled societies back East. The old frontier has been closed for a long time, and the results are clear to see: "the spread of irrationalism; the banalization of popular culture; the loss of willingness by individuals to take risks, to fend for themselves or think for themselves." Our manly vigor has been sapped, but we can regain it if we take a new lover. We must inseminate Mars.

Already in this argument you can smell the blood and slaughter, feel the slow tugging dispersal that leads to an utterly empty world. Our uniquely enlightened society in which human life is valued beyond measure could only achieve this feat through the free labor of tens of millions of slaves. That blank gaping frontier was, inconveniently, also someone's home; tens of millions more had to be brutally exterminated. Still, Mars is different, Mars is lifeless. (They think. Its underground oceans could hide giant pale sea-monsters, their kindly faces arranged on rotationally symmetrical tentacles; extremophile prokaryotes could form a dispersed consciousness that thinks its slow thoughts in the fading heat of a molten core, that rocky face could open its mouth and howl at the colonists' approach.) But even if they're right, and even if all of us on Earth represent the Europeans in this farcical historical mimesis, the outlook still doesn't look so great.

Every struggle against oppression is at heart a revulsion toward space. Once the members of our Committee stood on the barricades of cities under siege, framed by smoke and halberds; we died fighting those who would turn homes and communes into empty space. We know that Europe in the



period around contact with the Americas wasn't a cloistered prison crying out for a frontier, it was alive with revolt. When Columbus disappeared into the Atlantic, the Spanish throne was struggling to put down a peasant army of the *pagesos de remença;* similar fires were burning all across the continent. It was always a matter of orientation toward the future: Whether we were Cabochiens in Paris or Anabaptists in Münster, our call was for common property and the abolition of class society. Often it worked. By the end of the 15th century, feudalism was dying, while workers, peasants and artisans had higher wages and a higher standard of living than ever before. In response the ruling classes, unable to extract enough of a surplus from the restive peasants to reproduce their society, conquered the Americas.

The vast quantities of precious metals shipped back over the Atlantic were a means of social repression. They overturned the economy, leading to massive inflation, skyrocketing grain prices, a collapse in real wages that wasn't recovered until the 19th century, an enclosure of common property that has still never been reclaimed, and formed the seed of what would become industrial capitalism. The opening of the American frontier wasn't an opening onto the future but a foreclosing of it, a desperate attempt to save the ruling class that has prevented any significant reorganization of society, prevented any future, right up until the present.

It's a truism that capitalism never solves its problems but only moves them around. Finally it's running out of space. The conditions necessary not only for social but biological life are being eroded. It's running out of minerals; it's running out of value (the amount of debt on the planet now exceeds the total value of everything on Earth). And all this is accompanied by ghastly mocking nebulae and the idea that the greatest possible course of action for humanity is for us to go about *exploring the galaxy*, turning void into value, giving capital an infinite field in which to work its sinister magic.

We should be very afraid. In outer space there is no relation to nature, only antagonism. We think the world is being treated carelessly now; we haven't